DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 303 628 CE 051 879

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TITLE A Collaborative Approach to Planning the Induction Process for Beginning Vocational Teachers.
PUB DATE Dec 88
NOTE 13p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Vocational Education Research Association (St. Louis, MO, December 2-6, 1988).
PUB TYPE Speeches/Conference Papers (150) -- Viewpoints (120)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Beginning Teachers; Cooperative Programs; *Inservice Teacher Education; Institutional Cooperation; Postsecondary Education; Program Development; Program Improvement; *Teacher Centers; *Teacher Education Programs; *Teacher Orientation; *Vocational Education Teachers

ABSTRACT

An effective induction assistance program is necessary to prepare beginning vocational education teachers. A structured approach should be based on research, educational theory, experience, and the best thinking that can be found. To be successful, an induction assistance program must be a collaborative effort, accepted and supported by local administrators and teachers. Education faculty members at the local university also need to be involved. They can examine alternative solutions being tried throughout the country and evaluate them for possible implementation. At least one other group must be involved--the teacher professional organization. Members of specific teacher professional organizations have the program expertise and experiences that the beginning vocational teacher lacks. Under the leadership of the state vocational organization, members of the respective affiliate vocational teacher organizations should provide that experience to beginning teachers. Finally, a series of professional development centers should be created and professional development local coordinators should be hired to aid preservice and beginning teachers. An improved induction program will lead to better teaching of vocational education subjects. (KC)

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A COLLABORATIVE APPROACH TO PLANNING THE INDUCTION PROCESS FOR BEGINNING VOCATIONAL TEACHERS

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There is something special about learning to be a teacher. Shulman (1987, November) argues that teaching is probably the most demanding of all professions to master. There is a massive literature base about the education and development of teachers. Much of that literature deals with the problems and hazards attendant to the process (Veenam, 1984).

The process of becoming a teacher is fraught with obstacles (Varah, Theune, & Parker, 1986), and it takes place over an extended period of time Thies-Sprinthall & Sprinthall, 1987, April). It can be visualized as a continuum, (see Figure 1) including preservice education, induction, and continuing development (Camp, 1988, April). Of those three phases, the induction process is the focus of the research project on which the papers in this symposium are based.

CE051879

Paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Vocational Education Research Association, St, Louis, MO, December, 1988.

Based on research funded by the National Center for Research in Vocational Education

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The Induction Process

The induction of a beginning teacher involves an accumulation of many experiences. It includes all of those occurrences in the life of the newcomer that lead from the state of being a novice to being an established teacher. It cannot be defined in terms of a predetermined time period, nor can it be defined as a predetermined set of experiences (Camp & Heath, 1989).

Insert Figure 1 about here.

The transition from novice to established teacher is too critical to be left to chance as it has been in the past. As the teacher shortage develops over the next decade (Wise, 1988), and as demands for reform and improvement in education continue, we need to find a productive and effective way to assist the beginning teacher in making a smooth transition. What is needed is a structured, well-conceived approach to induction assistance, based on research, educational theory, experience, and the best thinking that we can bring to bear on the problem.

Collaboration Needed

To be successful, any induction assistance program must not only involve the local school officials, it must be accepted and supported by them. After all, education is fundamentally a local responsibility in this country. Of just as much importance, the program must have the acceptance and

support of the local teachers, upon whom such a program relies for much of the direct assistance activities.

The state department of education must also be involved. In every state there is a central body with overall responsibility for setting broad direction and coordination of the educational enterprise for the state. Certification is controlled at the state level. Increasingly, beginning-teacher assessment is being managed by state departments of education as the states' governors find education a politically important entity.

The university must be involved as well. It is from the university teacher education faculty that the research base upon which the program is built must come. Education faculty members at the university level can take a broader perspective of the induction process. They can examine alternative solutions being tried in schools across the state and nation and help evaluate these solutions for possible implementation in other schools.

There is at least one more group that should be involved. Because vocational education consists of a set of highly specialized programs at the local level, beginning vocational teachers often find themselves without potential mentors, or even role models, with the same subject-matter orientation. That is particularly true in small school systems. But we know it is important that the novice have someone in the same subject-matter field to go to for

subject-specific or program-specific assistance (Johnson, 1988).

Members of the respective teacher professional organizations have the subject-specific and program expertise and experiences that the beginning teacher of agriculture, business, home economics, marketing, trade and industrial education, or technology lacks and needs. Under the leadership of the state vocational organization, members of the respective affiliate vocational teacher organizations should provide that expertise to beginning teachers.

As an example, geographic area meetings of beginning marketing teachers and representatives of the state association of marketing education teachers could be held two to three times during the year. Neither the beginning teachers nor the experienced teacher would be remunerated for their time, but travel expenses could be reimbursed. State plans for vocational education would have to contain provisions for such expenditures. Teacher educators, state department of education personnel, PDCCs and PDLCs might become involved in the sessions by invitation, but actual responsibility for the instruction would be in the hands of the representatives of the professional organizations.

Thus, the final party in a comprehensive induction assistance program should be one that can provide such specific assistance. The American Vocational Association (AVA), through its state associations--and in particular, through its affiliated organizations--should accept respon-

sibility for assisting in the induction of new teachers into the profession. If the AVA is to be a professional organization that works for the improvement of the profession, what better way than by improving the process by which new teachers are brought into the nation's vocational classrooms? As an example, in Virginia the Virginia Vocational Agriculture Teachers' Association, under the leadership of the Virginia Vocational Association, should become involved in a collaborative induction assistance program for beginning agriculture teachers in the schools of the commonwealth.

Thus, the logical parties to a comprehensive induction assistance program are four (see Figure 2). Officials of the state department of education should provide direction, teacher education faculty members should provide a theoretical and research base, local school administrators and teachers should provide support and direct assistance on a day-to-day basis, and members of the profession through professional organizations should provide subject-specific and program-specific assistance.

Insert Figure 2 about here.

Professional Development Centers

In conjunction with the preservice and inservice assistance programs in the vocational teacher education institutions, a series of Professional Development Centers (PDCs)

should be established in selected school systems (see Figure 3). Each center would be operated by a Professional Development Center Coordinator (PDCC) with joint faculty status in both the university and the local school (see Figure 4). The position would be fulltime and would be funded through a collaborative arrangement among the local school system, the university, and the state department of education. Because the PDCC would be a locally based teacher, he or she would be more readily accepted as a team member by other local teachers and administrators (Hawks, 1988).

Insert Figures 3 & 4 about here.

Professional Development Local Coordinators

Clearly, not all vocational teachers will be trained and inducted into the profession in large school systems with Professional Development Center Coordinators to assist them. Yet provision should be made for the induction support and assistance of those beginning teachers too. It should be possible for any local school system that employs vocational teachers to assign, with appropriate released time, an experienced vocational teacher to assist in the organized induction of novices during the critical first years and to coordinate organized professional development activities on an ongoing basis to teachers throughout their careers. With somewhat analogous, albeit less extensive, responsibilities to the PDCC, this experienced teacher would carry the title

of Professional Development Local Coordinator (PDLC). This individual would play the same role as the PDCC, except on a smaller scale, and would have a part-time assignment as Professional Development Local Coordinator (as opposed to the full-time PDCC). He or she would be an adjunct faculty member of the cooperating teacher education faculty (see Figure 5).

Insert Figure 5 about here.

The PDCC would have extensive involvement with the field experience component of the teacher education preservice program, which as a result could become more field-based and less campus-based. In addition, the PDCC would have responsibility for the organization and conduct of an induction assistance program for beginning vocational teachers. Another area of responsibility would be the continuing professional development of more experienced vocational teachers in the local school system.

The coordinator would organize and coordinate the local induction support program for his or her school system. In this role, the coordinator would be responsible for training experienced and successful teachers to serve as mentors. The coordinator would then facilitate the matching and cooperation of mentors and novices. In addition, the coordinator would conduct ongoing professional induction support and assistance seminars for the novice teachers.

Because professional development is a continuing process that begins during preservice, encompasses the induction process, and extends throughout the career of the teacher, the coordinator would also be responsible for organizing and supervising the continuing professional development activities of vocational teachers of the school system. In this role, the coordinator would organize both university-credit graduate courses and non-credit workshops for local teachers. It is not expected that the coordinator would necessarily teach such courses, but rather would arrange for regular university faculty or other appropriate resource persons to teach courses in their areas of expertise with scheduling based on the actual needs of the local teachers and schools. As the university representative, the coordinator would be in a unique position to facilitate collaboration between university faculty and local school faculty.

Conclusions

Until we put in place an improved mechanism for the induction of beginning vocational teachers and their continuing professional development, the vision of an empowered professional teaching force will remain an illusion. Clearly an improved, structured induction program alone will not make that vision a reality, but the vision cannot be realized without it. In the language of logic, an effective induction assistance program is a necessary but not a sufficient precursor of a more professionalized teaching force.

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Figure 1. Professional Development in Teaching

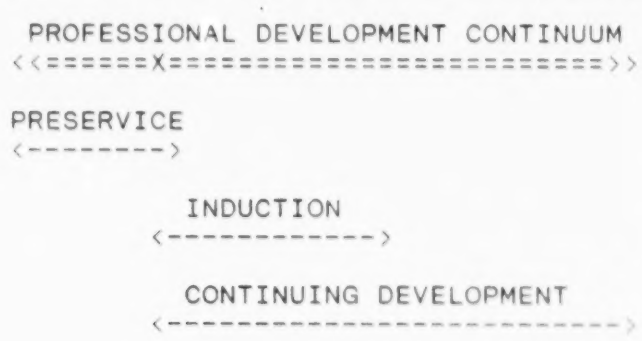

Figure 2. Collaboration in Vocational Teacher Induction.

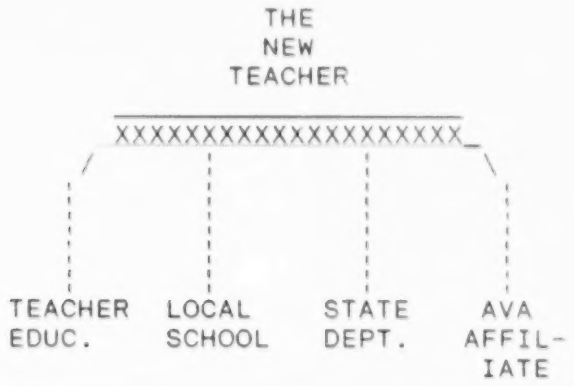

Figure 3. The Professional Development Center (PDC)

- SELECTED SCHOOLS
- SPECIAL RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN SCHOOL & UNIVERSITY
- FULL TIME COORDINATOR
- JOINT FUNDING:
  - * UNIVERSITY
  - * LOCAL SCHOOL
  - * STATE DEPARTMENT
- PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT STAGES:
  - * PRESERVICE
  - * INDUCTION
  - * CONTINUING DEVELOPMENT

Figure 4. The Professional Development Center Coordinator. (PDCC)

- LOCATED IN PDC
- FULL TIME
- JOINT FACULTY APPOINTMENT UNIVERSITY & SCHOOL
- COORDINATES FIELD SERVICE COMPONENT OF THE UNIVERSITY PRESERVICE
- TRAINS MENTORS
- ORGANIZES & SUPERVISES INDUCTION ASSISTANCE PROGRAM
  - * MENTOR
  - * BEGINNING TEACHER SEMINARS
  - * UNIVERSITY ASSISTANCE
  - * STATE DEPT. ASSISTANCE
  - * PROFESSIONAL ORGANIZATION ASSISTANCE
- ORGANIZES & ASSISTS IN CONDUCT OF CONTINUING PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM
  - * CREDIT COURSES
  - * NON-CREDIT WORKSHOPS
  - * LOCAL INSERVICE

Figure 5. Professional Development Local Coordinator. (PLDC)

- LOCATED IN OTHER SCHOOLS
- SOME RELEASE TIME
- JOINT FACULTY APPOINTMENT UNIVERSITY & SCHOOL
- TRAINS MENTORS
- ORGANIZES & SUPERVISES INDUCTION ASSISTANCE PROGRAM
    - * MENTOR
    - * BEGINNING TEACHER SEMINARS
    - * UNIVERSITY ASSISTANCE
    - * STATE DEPT. ASSISTANCE
    - * PROFESSIONAL ORGANIZATION ASSISTANCE
- ORGANIZES & ASSISTS IN CONDUCT OF CONTINUING PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM
    - * CREDIT COURSES
    - * NON-CREDIT WORKSHOPS
    - * LOCAL INSERVICE